

***Desk Referral Guide
for
Communicating with
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals***



Sponsored by the Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living

Communication Tips to Use with Deaf & Hard of Hearing Persons

Most Important: Relax! Every new situation offers plenty of opportunities for embarrassment, including communicating for the first time with a person with a hearing loss. With a sense of humor and an open mind, even major gaffes can be laughed off as you both determine the best way to communicate. Be patient also helps a great deal!

- Ask the person how you can best accommodate his/her communication needs.
- Be sure that you have the person's attention before you start to speak. For example, tap the person's shoulder, turn off/on the lights, etc.
- Look directly at the person and speak slowly but naturally. Do not over articulate.
- Do not speak directly into the person's ears and do not shout.
- Do not speak with objects in or near your mouth (gum, pencils, cigarettes, hands.)
- Stand in a well-lit area of the room. Make sure the light is on your face, not behind you.
- Do not be in constant motion when talking, such as pacing the floor or rocking in a chair.
- Eliminate as much background noise as possible.
- If the person does not appear to understand what is being said, rephrase the statement rather than repeating the misunderstood words over and over again.
- If you write to a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person, keep the message short and simple.
- Do not speak to a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person at a distance greater than 6 feet or less than 3 feet.

Please remember:

- Get the person's attention before you start to speak
- Face them, speak clearly, do not shout
- Get an interpreter or assistive device upon request
- Write brief notes to communicate

TTY Etiquette



Good TTY etiquette includes:

1. When calling TTY users, let the phone ring at least 7 or more times before hanging up. Many Deaf and Hard of Hearing TTY users rely on flashing lights to alert them to ringing phones. Flashers can take longer than sound to attract attention.
2. Callers should identify themselves at the beginning of calls. Any other people who may be watching the conversation also should be identified.
3. Callers should use the standard abbreviations of GA, Q, HD and SK.
4. Always tell TTY users when calls are going to be put on “hold” or transferred.
5. When TTY users type “Can you read me?” they want to know if the message is clear and without garbled letters and numbers. If the message is garbled, hit the space bar a few times. If this does not clear up the message, both parties should hang up and try the call again.

How do you save time when making a TTY call?

TTY calls take longer, because typing is slower than talking. To save time, common English abbreviations frequently are used. In addition, some punctuation, articles, or prepositions are omitted when it does not interfere with meaning. Many TTY users type without commas or periods, creating telegraphic but intelligible messages. The result is an efficient exchange of information.

Common TTY abbreviations are:

GA = Go Ahead	SK = Stop Keying or Good-Bye
U = You	XXX = Mistake
HD = Hold	Q = Question mark
MSG = Message	THX = Thanks
GA to SK = Completing all messages and getting ready to hang up	

How to Make a TTY Call to Another TTY Caller:

1. Place the handset in the acoustic coupler (modem) attached to a regular telephone and turn on the power. Two small lights will come on. Only the power light will stay on; the phone light waits to respond to any sounds picked up by the acoustic coupler.
2. Dial the number and watch the phone light, which shows the dial tone, busy signal, or ringing by corresponding light patterns. The light remains on for the length of the sound and goes off when there is no sound. For example, the light flashes rapidly and rhythmically with a busy signal.
3. People answering the phone will respond with their names and a short message followed by "GA", which means "go ahead."
4. You start typing at this point and identify yourself at the beginning of the TTY call.
5. To end a turn in the conversation, type "GA", and the other person will begin typing again. Each person is expected to take a turn only after receiving a "GA" from the other party.
6. When you are done with your conversation, type "GA to SK", meaning "go ahead to stop keying" or "good-bye", to let the person know you are finished talking on the TTY.
7. A TTY message in process cannot be interrupted, even if one knows what the other person is going to type.

How to Request an Interpreter or CART Services



As soon as you know you need a sign language interpreter or Computer Aided Real Time Translation (CART) for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, you can:

- Contact an interpreter directly. For interpreter contact information, go to www.dad.state.vt.us/dvr/deaf/interp.htm#vermont
- Call the Vermont Interpreter Referral Service (VIRS) at: 800-639-1519 V/TTY or 802-254-3920 V/TTY. E-mail: VIRS@sover.net Website: www.virs.org
For a nominal fee, VIRS will assist you in locating an interpreter.

Information you will need to provide:

- ✓ Date and time of the event
- ✓ Exact location of the event
- ✓ Name and phone number of contact person
- ✓ Names of the deaf and/or hard of hearing participant(s)
- ✓ Detailed description of the event
- ✓ Billing information
- ✓ Printed materials that will be used at the event, if applicable

Please note: VIRS would like at least one month in advance notice when requesting an interpreter, if possible.

Telephone Relay Service for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

What equipment is required?

The most common device used to make a relay call is a TTY (Text telephone device) that can be used together with a phone handset. However, the equipment you need may vary depending upon the type of relay service you use. For more information on how to obtain a device in your area for your specific needs, call Vermont Relay Customer Service at 1-800-676-3777.

How do I receive a relay call?

The hearing disabled person dials a relay operator (711) and types a number for a VT resident or business. The relay operator then calls that number and announces "this is the Vermont Relay Service. Have you received a relay call before?" If the called party answers "Yes," then the call proceeds. If the answer is "No", then the operator will explain that the other person is hearing disabled and is using a Text Telephone (TTY) to type to the operator, and the operator is relaying the call as read. The operator will then proceed to relay the message from both sides.

How do I make a relay call?

(For voice users) Standard telephone users can easily initiate calls to TTY users. The Communications Assistant (CA) types the hearing person's spoken words to the TTY user and reads back the typed replies.

1. Dial 711
2. You will hear, "Vermont Relay CA (number). How may I help you?"
3. Give the CA the area code and telephone number of the person you wish to call and any further instructions.
4. The CA will process your call, relaying exactly what the TTY user is typing. The CA will relay what you say back to the TTY user. Be sure to talk directly to your caller, avoid saying "tell him" or "tell her," and say "GA" (which means Go Ahead) at the end of your conversation.

Other Relay Services to Communicate with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals by phone

CapTel

Ideal for people with some degree of hearing loss, the Captioned Telephone (CapTel) works like any other telephone with one important addition: It displays on a screen every word the caller says throughout the conversation. CapTel phone users can listen to the caller, and can also read the written captions in the CapTel's bright display window.

Video Relay

Video Relay Service (VRS) lets users communicate visually in their native American Sign Language (ASL) for a richer communications experience. VRS allows the use of ASL in computers or televisions with high-speed internet connection.

Internet Relay

Sprint Relay Online (internet relay service) puts the power of Web communication at computer users' fingertips for relay calls without the use of TTY devices.

Need Assistance?

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